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Tuesday, August 22, 2006

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Tragic end sends many to mourn Raven

Detroiters touched by girl's death pay respects; police seek suspect

BY CECIL ANGEL and NAOMI R. PATTON

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

August 22, 2006

The family and friends of Raven Jeffries were mostly composed during the 7-year-old girl's funeral Monday night in the Risko-Ferguson funeral home.

But in the end, they could not hold back. They wept openly as pictures of Raven as a chubby-cheeked infant blended on a screen with footage of her grabbing candy from a pinata at a party this past May, all set to the strains of "It's So Hard to Say Goodbye" and "Amazing Grace."

"This is not the end. This is a new beginning," the Rev. Ray Foster said during the service. "We are here to celebrate the home-going of Raven."



Raven Jeffries, 7

More than 200 people attended the funeral of Raven, who was outside her home in the 6500 block of McDonald in southwest Detroit on Aug. 4 when she vanished.

Her burned body was found in Romulus three days later, but authorities didn't confirm it was her until Aug. 14. Police have not publicly identified any suspects.

The hunt for Raven, and the anguish of her family, played out publicly for weeks, and led to the standing room-only service in the funeral home's main chapel. Dozens spilled out into the entry and hallways.

Many in attendance never met her; some hadn't seen her since she was little more than a toddler. But Beverly Tolliver knew her well. Tolliver, the principal at Priest Elementary School where Raven was going to start the second grade this year, was one of the first speakers at the funeral.

"Raven was one of our babies," she said, barely containing her grief.

Raven's cousin, Derrick Gilbert of Detroit, said he never really got to know her, but

he read a poem written in her honor, "The Innocence of an Angel."

"Her purpose has been fulfilled. ... Keep our faith strong and uplift us," he read. "You are our guardian now. ... Help us understand that it was the Father that said your time was due."

For Raven's brother David Holser, this understanding remained elusive.

"When she was a baby, she was so beautiful," he said, crying.

For two days, scores of people streamed into the chapel where they filed past floral arrangements flanking a white casket under a large mounted photograph of Raven, wearing a pink dress and white sandals.

In the hours before the funeral, Debbie Collins, 50, gently sobbed as she looked at the casket. She, too, never knew Raven.

"She's up in heaven with God," she said.

Nakia Prather, 31, of Detroit expressed outrage at the death: "For this to happen to her, "it just lets me know the devil's always working. It's terrible. It's cruel."

Moments after the service ended, family and friends released 50 pink balloons.

"We love you, Raven," they yelled, as the balloons sailed east above Michigan Avenue.

In the program, Brenda Jeffries wrote a note to her daughter.

"Raven -- I want you to know that I love you and I miss you. Even though you're no longer here with me physically, you're still here in spirit, in my heart and in my memories."

Raven will be cremated.

Contact **CECIL ANGEL** at 313-223-4531 or angel@freepress.com.

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Funeral Held For Raven Jeffries

Police Search For Suspects In Girl's Death

POSTED: 3:37 pm EDT August 21, 2006

The family of a 7-year-old girl who was reported missing and later found dead will hold funeral services on Monday evening.

Raven Jeffries disappeared Aug. 4 from her home on McDonald Street, according to police. Her burned body was found three days later in a Romulus field. Police determined the girl's identification through DNA tests.

Visitation for Raven will be held at Risko-Ferguson Funeral Home in Detroit until 7 p.m. The funeral will immediately follow.

Authorities said there are several suspects they are investigating in Raven's death, including family members, according to Local 4. No arrests have been made.

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **The Detroit News**

To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

August 22, 2006

Family, friends bid farewell to Raven

200 remember girl who looked forward to 2nd grade

The Detroit News

DETROIT -- More than 200 family members and friends gathered at Detroit's Risko-Ferguson Home on Monday afternoon to say their final farewells to 7-year-old Raven Jeffries, whose badly burned body was discovered Aug. 7 in a Romulus field.

The family passed out programs emblazoned with a picture of Raven. The service began with a recorded version of Aretha Franklin's "Amazing Grace."

Raven was found murdered early this month. It took several days for police to make a positive identification on the body. DNA tests confirmed her identity.

Meanwhile, Romulus police are still looking for Raven's killer. They have no suspects. She was last seen alive Aug. 4 outside her McDonald Street home on Detroit's southwest side.

When the family was first notified that her body had been identified, her brother, David Hosler, described Raven as a happy child who was looking forward to the second grade.

"I don't want to have to think about burying my little sister, but that's where we are," he said.

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Authorities said there are several suspects they are investigating in Raven's death, including family members, according to Local 4. No arrests have been made.

Foster Boy's Death Ruled Homicide

No Arrests Made

POSTED: 4:28 pm EDT August 21, 2006

The Wayne County Medical Examiner has ruled the death of a 2-year-old boy at a Detroit foster home was a homicide, Local 4 reported.

Isaac Lethbridge suffered bruises to his face and burn marks to his chest, according to police. Police said there was also evidence that he was sexually assaulted.

The child was dead on arrival at Children's Hospital Wednesday, according to police. Emergency crews said the toddler stopped breathing.

The child was living at the foster home for more than a month along with his 4-year-old sister, according to police. Child Protective Services removed the sister and several other children from the home, Local 4 reported.

No arrests have been made in connection with the boy's death.

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August 22, 2006

Civil suit OK'd in death of boy, 4

Social workers denied immunity over alleged failure to report abuse in Detroit foster home.

Paul Egan / The Detroit News

DETROIT -- Social workers can be sued for their alleged failure to report physical abuse of a 4-year-old boy who was beaten to death by his foster parent, a federal judge ruled Monday.

Beth Omtvedt and Lori Ann Wright, who were employed by a state-contracted private agency and were earlier acquitted of criminal charges, argued that as social workers they had immunity from civil litigation in the 2003 death of Joshua Causey at his foster home in Detroit.

But U.S. District Judge Victoria Roberts ruled a lawsuit brought against them by Causey's grandmother, Lureatha Thomas, may proceed.

Joshua died March 18, 2003. He suffered cuts to his head and face, a broken shoulder and blunt force trauma to his head and a kidney, the coroner's report showed.

Joshua's foster mother, Lynda Carol Baker, who prosecutors said punched and beat him with a hairbrush the day before he died, was convicted of involuntary manslaughter.

The state has since used the tragic incident as a case study for training workers in child protective services and foster care.

Baker, the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center in Farmington Hills, and Emily Berner, who worked with Omtvedt and Wright at the foster care agency and also claimed immunity, are the other defendants in the lawsuit.

The defendants deny the allegations.

In 2005, charges of failure to report suspected child abuse against Omtvedt and Wright were dismissed. Berner was never charged with a crime.

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published August 22, 2006

Hollands' separate trials save Ingham Co. money

What's next

- A pretrial hearing for Tim and Lisa Holland is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. today before Ingham County Circuit Judge Paula Manderfield.

Logistics simpler; now one jury will be seated at a time

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

Ingham County taxpayers are off the hook for thousands of dollars in courthouse changes now that Tim and Lisa Holland won't be tried at the same time.

But the county still is spending at least \$9,000 to prepare for what could be the area's biggest criminal trial in years.

In July, the Board of Commissioners' judiciary committee approved \$30,000 for special court needs for the Hollands' trials. The couple is charged with murder and child abuse in the death of their 7-year-old adopted son, Ricky.

The state Court of Appeals earlier this month delayed Tim Holland's trial, pending the result of an appeal filed by his attorney. Last week, Circuit Judge Paula Manderfield ruled Lisa Holland's trial will go forward Sept. 11; she scheduled Tim Holland's for Jan. 22.

Those court decisions scrapped plans to bus two sets of jurors to downtown Lansing's Veterans Memorial Courthouse to avoid parking problems and to build a separate room where the public could view the trial on video monitors.

Court officials were considering the special public viewing room when it appeared a second jury box would be placed in a section of Manderfield's courtroom normally available to the public.

County Commissioner Rebecca Bahar-Cook said the \$30,000 figure is a spending cap.

"I don't think they will be using it all, now that it's been split into two trials," Bahar-Cook said.

The county will spend \$3,800 on the jury box and plans to spend another \$5,100 to set up a separate room where media members can watch the trials on at least one video monitor.

Construction of the second jury box began after Manderfield ruled in May the Hollands would stand trial at the same time. Twelve jurors and four alternates will be empaneled in each trial.

Even though the nearly completed jury box no longer is needed, "They decided to go ahead and finish it," said Cheryl Fritze, the trial's media coordinator.

The 14-seat jury box is portable and could be used for other trials in the future, she said.

Manderfield has said she will reserve five seats in the courtroom for reporters. Scores of state and national media are expected to cover the trials.

It's also not clear how much more it will cost the county, since some expert witnesses might have to testify twice. Assistant Prosecutor Mike Ferency said last week that some medical experts cost about \$300 an hour.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha@lsj.com.

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Child abuse charged: Couple remain in jail for alleged incidents involving two children

WOLVERINE - A Wolverine couple remain lodged in the Cheboygan County Jail following their arrests and arraignments Tuesday on four counts each of child abuse in the alleged physical abuse of two children.

Chancey Dohring, 40, and Peggy Moore, 30, are charged with abusing Moore's children. The Michigan State Police (MSP) are not releasing age or gender of the victims.

A news release from the MSP Cheboygan post reported the charges of one count each for first-degree child abuse and three counts each for second-degree child abuse, stem from alleged incidents in 2004, including Dohring's biting of the two victims.

Troopers from Cheboygan, working with the Dept. of Human Services (DHS), interviewed the victims during the investigation, which led to the arrest of Dohring and Moore who were living together as boyfriend and girlfriend in Wolverine with the two victims. Moore's children have been placed in foster care.

According to the Cheboygan MSP, Dohring allegedly grabbed one of the victim's hands and violently pulled the child's fingers apart. The child required nine stitches to sew up the webbing between fingers.

In addition to allegedly biting the children, Dohring also allegedly duct taped their mouths and nailed the children's strewn clothes to the floor.

Moore is alleged to have witnessed the abuse to her children by Dohring at the couple's residence but never intervened or attempted to stop him.

The couple were arraigned in 89th District Court in Cheboygan Tuesday. Bond was set for Dohring at \$50,000, 10-percent. Bond was set at \$15,000; 10-percent for Moore.

First-degree child abuse is a 15-year felony and second-degree child abuse is a four-year felony.

A preliminary hearing for the couple is set for Wednesday at 1:30 p.m. in District Court.

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'Pastor Paul' may face more felony charges

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, August 22, 2006

By Kim Crawford

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FLINT - An assistant Genesee County prosecutor says authorities have "95 to 100 pieces of evidence" against a self-described youth pastor charged with installing cameras to spy on teens he invited into his south Flint home.

In a hearing Monday in Flint District Court, Assistant Genesee County Prosecutor Gladys Christopherson said authorities anticipate more charges will be brought against Paul Gagnon, 51, "far in excess of the 2-year felony he's been charged with."

The new evidence includes cameras, computer discs and drives, film and videotapes that recently were turned over to Flint police.

Christopherson recommended that a preliminary hearing scheduled Monday for Gagnon, on the charge of installing eavesdropping equipment, be postponed for at least a week.

David Clark, an attorney who initially represented Gagnon, agreed to the postponement.

Clark also said he could be representing one of Gagnon's alleged victims and therefore wouldn't be able to represent Gagnon.

Gagnon has been held in the Genesee County Jail for more than two weeks.

Gagnon, who operates a remodeling and maintenance business, was part of a small group of local people who conducted a youth ministry aimed at teens from disadvantaged backgrounds, police said.

The group met at Gagnon's home and also has attended at least three area churches in recent years: Calvary Community Church, 1201 W. 12th St., Flint; Victory Tabernacle, 118 E. Belvidere Ave., Flint; and New Haven Baptist Church, 1477 E. Bristol Road, Burton.

The Rev. Fenton Shoults of Victory Tabernacle said he didn't want to comment about Gagnon until it was known whether more charges will be brought.

John Foltz, chairman at Calvary, said that while Gagnon had attended the church, he was turned down by the board when he wanted an official position.

"He was never credentialed," Foltz said. "It's my understanding that he had no official role here."

Pastors from New Haven Baptist Church have said that Gagnon visited their church and appeared there

with a group of teens, but he wasn't an employee or staff member.

A man who said he worked for Gagnon told The Flint Journal that Gagnon has been associated with an effort to work with teens for years.

"He would take them on trips up north and to Cedar Point," said Tom West, 35, of Flint. "He referred to himself as 'Pastor Paul.'"

The eavesdropping charge against Gagnon came early this month after a teenager found cameras installed in a bathroom and bedroom used by teenagers in Gagnon's home.

A preliminary hearing in that case most likely will be scheduled the week of Sept. 11 before Flint District Judge Nathaniel C. Perry III.

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August 22, 2006

Teen victimized in Web attack

Man, 33, accused of extorting nude images of Rochester Hills girl to be extradited from Indiana.

Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

ROCHESTER HILLS -- A 33-year-old man was arrested Monday, accused of extorting nude photographs and videos from a Rochester Hills teenager by convincing her he had hacked into her computer and could ruin her parents' credit rating, authorities say.

Barbar Majid Chaudhry was arrested in Fort Wayne, Ind., where he and his wife and child were visiting his brother. In a case that Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard said Monday could have national and possibly international implications, Chaudhry--a Pakistani national-- is to be extradited here to face charges of extortion, child sexually abusive activity, and use of a computer to commit a crime, all felonies punishable by up to 20 years in prison. He will also face charges of communicating with another to commit a crime, a felony that carries a 15-year prison penalty.

"This is scary and disgusting on several levels," Bouchard said. "It underscores what we have been saying for some time: Parents have to know what their children are doing on the Internet and their children have to be comfortable enough with their parents to let them know of anything unusual that they encounter when going on the computer."

Bouchard said police know about dozens of other possible victims found on Chaudhry's computer.

"We think there are going to be a lot of victims across America and they've just scratched the surface."

Bouchard said the scheme involved computer transmissions made in Dubai and Germany and "literally there could be victims around the world."

Bouchard said in March, when the girl was 15 years old, she received an Automatic Instant Message over the computer by an unknown person -- "martinisback001" -- who informed her he had hacked into her computer and gained access to not only her personal files but also her parents' credit card information.

"He said he had done this as a hobby," Bouchard said

That man, believed to be Chaudhry, was transmitting e-mails from his home 7,000 miles away in Dubai, Bouchard said.

The man demanded the girl e-mail nude photographs of herself to him or he would ruin her credit and that of her family, according to investigators. After she sent the photographs, police say the man then demanded nude videos of her and threatened to send the nude photographs he already had to her friends and also post them on the Web.

The girl then complied with the second demand as well, investigators said. The man allegedly also said he wanted to meet her for sex and gave her a specific date and location for their meeting.

Members of the Oakland County Sheriff's Office Internet Crimes Unit posed as the girl online as he attempted to hack into her computer earlier this month. The computer probe led back to a Fort Wayne, Ind., address where the suspect was found with several relatives, including his wife, brother and sister-in-law, and several children.

During an interview with Fort Wayne police, authorities said the suspect admitted he had been communicating by computer with a 16-year-old Michigan girl who had supplied him with nude photographs and videos. He also admitted attempting to hack into the girl's computer but denied ever forcing her to take the photos or video, they said.

Bouchard said investigators are still going over Chaudhry's computer, seized in Indiana, and suspect he operated under several different "screen" names.

At one point Chaudhry allegedly instructed the girl to do specific things on the video and told the girl he intended to have sex with her at a hotel and was exploring several locations where the meeting would take place.

The girl told her family and the sheriff's office became involved last month, Bouchard said.

"This is how a blackmailer works," Bouchard said. "Once they get you on the hook they can easily move on to the next phase."

Anyone who may have been similarly contacted on the Internet is asked to call the Oakland County Sheriff's Office at (248) 858-4954.

You can reach Mike Martindale at (248) 647-7226 or mmartindale@detnews.com.

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Two more Internet predators nabbed

Tuesday, August 22, 2006

By Judy Putnam

Lansing Bureau

LANSING -- Calling it a "sad landmark," Attorney General Mike Cox said his office has surpassed 100 arrests of alleged Internet predators snagged by investigators posing as minors in online chat rooms.

About 80 of those arrested since January of 2003 have been convicted for crimes such as soliciting a minor for immoral purposes, Cox said. Most are from Michigan.

At a Monday news conference, Cox piled 100 laptops on the podium to represent the number arrested since he took office. He's running for a second four-year term this fall.

Cox said parents should check their children's online "buddies" lists for the names Shawn Hogan or michiganfun2003, the screen names of David Crockett, 33, of Monroe Township, and Michael Bohdan Dackiw, 38, of Sterling Heights.

Crockett was arrested Friday and arraigned on four counts of using the Internet to solicit a minor for immoral purposes, a 10-year felony, and four counts of using the Internet to disseminate sexually explicit material to a minor, a four-year felony.

Dackiw was arrested Monday and arraigned on two counts of using the Internet to solicit a minor.

Cox said those arrested have come from all walks of life, including two priests, a former prosecutor, a minister, a teacher, a bus driver and a public safety officer. In two cases, investigators were able to identify prior victims, he said.

Parents should call the Attorney General's Child and Public Protection Unit at (313) 456-0180 if their children had contact with those suspects.

Cox said Michigan law allows those charges even when a suspect is communicating with an undercover investigator, because the suspects believed they were communicating with minors.

The Michigan Democratic Party Monday issued a press release criticizing the efforts. Chairman Mark Brewer said Cox only devoted three attorneys, or 1 percent of 300 attorneys, to protecting children on the Internet.

Cox said he had a better record than his Democratic predecessor Jennifer Granholm. He said the previous administration made only 22 arrests.

To protect kids, the attorney general's office, suggests parents:

- Create clear, simple rules for children to follow. Check Netsmartz.org, a Web site by the national Center for Missing and Exploited Children, for a list of rules.
- Keep computers with Internet access in an open location, visible to other family members.
- Tell their kids not to post personal information or photos since predators can use popular Web sites such

as Myspace.com to track down children if they give out such information as their last name, school, address or phone number.

- Encourage children to come to you if they are uncomfortable with something that happens while online.
- Learn as much as possible about the Internet.
- Purchase software that blocks pornography, gambling or other unacceptable sites.

Contact Judy Putnam at (517) 487-8888 x232 or e-mail her at jputnam@boothnewspapers.com.
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AG's office arrests more than 100 Internet predators

8/21/2006, 6:08 p.m. ET

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Attorney General Mike Cox on Monday announced his office have arrested more than 100 people accused of trolling the Internet and soliciting children for sex.

Investigators arrested the 100th person Friday and the 101th on Monday.

Cox said it was a "sad landmark" but could help make parents aware of the dangers their children face while surfing the Web.

The latest men to be detained communicated online with undercover investigators posing as 13- and 14-year-old girls, Cox said.

Michael Bohdan Dackiw, 38, of Sterling Heights, was arrested at work Monday and arraigned on two counts of using a computer to solicit a minor for immoral purposes and five counts of using a computer to disseminate sexually explicit matter to a minor. He is accused of soliciting an undercover officer for sex and sending video of himself masturbating, Cox said.

Shawn David Crockett, 33, of Monroe County's Monroe Township, was arrested Friday and arraigned on four counts each of soliciting a minor for immoral purposes and disseminating sexually explicit matter to a minor. Authorities allege he solicited an undercover investigator for sex and sent the officer lewd pictures.

The men face up to 10 years in prison for each of the most serious counts if they are convicted.

Others arrested over a three-year period include a former assistant prosecutor, two priests, a school teacher and a bus driver.

Cox suggested some ways parents can help protect children who surf the Internet: creating ground rules for children to follow, putting the computer in a location that is visible to other family members, not letting children post identifying information on the Internet without permission, stressing that children can come to parents if they feel threatened or uncomfortable with something online, and considering buying Internet blocking programs to monitor what children do online.

On the Net:

Attorney General Mike Cox: <http://www.michigan.gov/ag>

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STURGIS JOURNAL

Tuesday, August 22, 2006

Man jailed on sex charges

Tuesday, August 22, 2006

NOTTAWA TWP. - St. Joseph County Sheriff's deputies arrested a 41-year-old man early Sunday morning after searching a residence in the 25000 block of Wallace Street near Nottawa.

Wayne Louis Vickery was charged with soliciting a minor for sex, assault, possession of child pornography and a probation violation.

He is being held in the St. Joseph County Jail on \$75,000 bond.

About 1:30 a.m. Sunday, deputies were called to the intersection of Railroad and Wallace streets in Nottawa after a young man flagged down a witness and told him he had been attached.

Deputies located the victim and then obtained a search warrant for Vickery's residence and vehicle.

Police seized numerous items of child pornography along with a computer and video tapes.

Michigan State Police assisted with the case.

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Teacher sues ex-wife for false claims of sex abuse

Allegations he molested sons part of bitter custody dispute

PUBLISHED: August 22, 2006

By Jameson Cook
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

An Eastpointe school teacher has sued his ex-wife for her false accusations to police that he sexually molested their son and her son.

Jeffrey Edwards, 33, filed a lawsuit in Macomb Circuit Court on Friday, saying his former wife, Muingo Muthui-Edwards, slandered him and deliberately inflicted emotional distress on him by telling police and social service agencies here and in Pennsylvania that he molested the two boys, aged 3 and 6.

Eastpointe police and social service officials in the two states have determined that the assaults never occurred and have cleared Edwards of any wrongdoing.

Edwards told The Macomb Daily on Monday that he filed the lawsuit because of the toll the made-up accusations have taken on him.

"I've spent countless hours and money defending my reputation," Edwards said. "This has been a nightmare, an atrocity."

The couple, whose divorce was finalized in April after 13 months of marriage, are mired in a custody battle over their son. Muthui-Edwards, who moved to northeast Pennsylvania to live near her parents after the divorce, also has another son from a prior relationship.

Because of the false allegations and Muthui-Edwards being held in contempt of court twice for failing to appear, Edwards in April gained physical custody of the boy. Muthui-Edwards now has the same visitation that Edwards had, in a decision by Judge Antonio Viviano two weeks after the divorce was granted.

Edwards believes his ex-wife fabricated the allegations to gain custody. In the lawsuit, he calls her statements "malicious for the purpose of bringing (Edwards) into disrepute and subjecting him to criminal prosecution."

The allegations first arose shortly before a custody trial was to be held in front of Viviano. Muthui-Edwards started complaining to officials in both states and to Eastpointe police late last year that the two boys said they were abused. She claimed the boys told her that Edwards touched them inappropriately. The older child also was having nightmares, and the younger child was digressing in toilet training, she told authorities.

But investigations that included interviews of the boys and Edwards turned up no evidence of abuse. An Eastpointe police report says: "This case has been highly scrutinized by several layers of government and all have found no merit to these claims against Jeffrey Edwards."

She repeated the allegations in July, and another investigation finding no wrongdoing was concluded Aug. 14.

Muthui-Edwards could not be reached for comment Monday. Her attorney in the divorce, Steven Freers, said he could not comment because he had not yet seen the lawsuit.

Edwards said the allegations have not affected his position as a teacher at Kelly Middle School in East Detroit Public Schools. But he had to take a 2-month leave of absence because of the anxiety, stress and embarrassment, he said in the lawsuit.

The allegations prevented Edwards from seeing his son for several months from around last Christmas until March while investigators probed the matter, Edwards said.

Edwards, who since the dispute has gotten involved with a fathers' rights organization, said the ordeal shows the ease in which a father can be accused of sexual assault during a custody battle.

"It's a double standard. It's easy for a woman to accuse the man of something," he said. "I have to prove my innocence."

Sexual-molestation allegations by themselves can be extremely damaging to a schoolteacher.

"I have everything to lose," he said.

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http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/082206/loc_teacher001.shtml



August 22, 2006

A Welfare Law Milestone Finds Many Left Behind

By [ERIK ECKHOLM](#)

PHILADELPHIA, Aug. 18 — Over the last five years, Mysheda Autry has received welfare checks and food stamps, gone through a welfare-to-work program and briefly held several jobs. She has also given birth to her second and third children.

Ms. Autry, 25, with a 10th-grade education, was finally overwhelmed by the demands of work and family, and in February she showed up at the People's Emergency Center, a social service agency, with her three children, a fourth on the way, no job and no place to live.

She has exceeded the usual five-year limit for receiving welfare, and although the state has given her a reprieve, her benefits will be cut off, she has been warned, if she does not resume full-time job-skill classes and a job search within eight and a half months after her new baby is born.

As political leaders give two cheers on Tuesday for the 10th anniversary of the welfare reform law that helped draw many single mothers from dependency into the work force, though often leaving them still in poverty, social workers and researchers are raising concerns about families that have not made the transition and often lead extraordinarily precarious lives.

These include mothers who, so beleaguered by personal problems and parenting that they have not been able to keep jobs, continue to need counseling and cash. They also include another large group of poor mothers — one million by some estimates — who are neither working nor receiving benefits.

The central idea of the nation's public assistance programs since 1996 has been that cash aid should be only a temporary support while parents are ushered into jobs, with skills training and child-care subsidies to help. The federal government set a time limit

of five years for individual recipients, though exemptions were allowed for hardship cases, and states could extend aid with their own money.

Simply cutting families off at an arbitrary date has often proved impractical, because a significant group of mothers like Ms. Autry — no one has precise numbers — have not been able to hold on to jobs, even after attending required classes and while receiving other aid.

Their lives are simply too troubled by disabilities, turmoil and, often, bad personal choices, researchers say. Poor education, lack of support from their families or their children's fathers, mental health and drug problems, and unstable living conditions are common among this group, and a rigid time limit may only harm the children.

"There aren't so many mothers who could never get on track, but getting them into work will take a lot more time and resources than many states have been able to provide," said LaDonna A. Pavetti, a welfare researcher with Mathematica Policy Research.

Without such extra attention, more will join a growing group of poor families, known to scholars as the "disconnected," that are scraping by without either cash benefits or employment.

According to new calculations by the private Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, as of 2003, the last year for which detailed data are available, about one million single mothers were neither working nor receiving cash benefits from welfare, disability or unemployment insurance and were not living with a partner who had any of these income sources either.

Other studies suggest that 10 percent to 20 percent of mothers who left the welfare rolls in the years after the 1996 overhaul did not have work or other significant means of support a year or two later.

While some have sources of unreported income — a little money from a new companion, perhaps — and many are helped by food stamps, their children are often growing up in the poverty and tumult that the reforms were intended to end.

On Friday, days before her new baby was due, Ms. Autry described her life's obstacles so far.

She, five brothers and a sister grew up with a mother who split from Ms. Autry's father

early on and was on welfare. After Ms. Autry became pregnant in the 10th grade and dropped out of school, she continued living in a crowded, tumultuous house filling with babies. She had to move out last February, however, when her mother moved to a smaller home that she now shares with two sons, the other daughter and that daughter's two children.

The father of Ms. Autry's 6-year-old boy is out of the picture, as is the father of the girl whose birth is imminent. The father of her 3-year-old girl and her 21-month-old boy is in prison.

After the birth of her first child, she worked at McDonald's for several months. But she could not stand it, she said, when the boy started referring to her mother as Mom.

She went into a jobs program, working 20 hours a week at a [Y.M.C.A.](#) with her wages paid by the welfare office and spending an additional 10 hours a week in a required search for permanent work. Eventually she landed a receptionist's job at a construction company where she worked for seven months.

"I just couldn't manage the child care," she said, though the state offered aid. At the time, her mother, who had been the prime caregiver, had herself been required to go into a work program.

For the last two years, Ms. Autry has received cash welfare benefits of \$496 a month, plus \$397 in food stamps. She has vowed to have no more children and to get her G.E.D. With no apparent drug or alcohol problem or serious cognitive drawbacks, she is in a better state than some other women lagging on welfare.

"We see families coming in who don't have one monolithic problem; instead it's a lethal combination of 10 issues in their lives that come together," said Gloria M. Guard, president of the People's Emergency Center, where Ms. Autry and her children found shelter. "They end up with lots of kids, no family support, no education, no coping skills, so they get a job and lose it and get another job and lose it. It's not like they are lying around not doing anything; their lives are constantly on the go as they run behind their kids. But they end up falling way behind."

Pennsylvania has been among the more generous states, Ms. Guard said, in allowing exemptions from time limits and working with mothers who show a willingness to try. But the services to help such women have been hurt by federal budget cuts, she said, and welfare agencies are under new federal pressure to get more women into jobs.

Ms. Autry and her children are living in a one-room “transitional apartment” at the emergency center. She may soon move into a larger efficiency apartment within the graduated system of the center, where, contrary to her current circumstances, she will have to shop and cook for herself and get the children to school or the doctor on her own — practice for a bigger move.

“Sooner or later she’ll have to get a job,” Ms. Guard said.

A possibility, once Ms. Autry gets some training, may be work as a home health aide.

But “the real problem,” Ms. Guard said, “is how is she going to keep it.”

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NEW YORK TIMES OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

How We Ended Welfare, Together

By BILL CLINTON

Published: August 22, 2006

TEN years ago today I signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. By then I had long been committed to welfare reform. As a governor, I oversaw a workfare experiment in Arkansas in 1980 and represented the National Governors Association in working with Congress and the Reagan administration to draft the welfare reform bill enacted in 1988.

Yet when I ran for president in 1992, our system still was not working for the taxpayers or for those it was intended to help. In my first State of the Union address, I promised to “end welfare as we know it,” to make welfare a second chance, not a way of life, exactly the change most welfare recipients wanted it to be.

Most Democrats and Republicans wanted to pass welfare legislation shifting the emphasis from dependence to empowerment. Because I had already given 45 states waivers to institute their own reform plans, we had a good idea of what would work. Still, there were philosophical gaps to bridge. The Republicans wanted to require able-bodied people to work, but were opposed to continuing the federal guarantees of food and medical care to their children and to spending enough on education, training, transportation and child care to enable people to go to work in lower-wage jobs without hurting their children.

On Aug. 22, 1996, after vetoing two earlier versions, I signed welfare reform into law. At the time, I was widely criticized by liberals who thought the work requirements too harsh and conservatives who thought the work incentives too generous. Three members of my administration ultimately resigned in protest. Thankfully, a majority of both Democrats and Republicans voted for the bill because they shouldn't be satisfied with a system that had led to intergenerational dependency.

The last 10 years have shown that we did in fact end welfare as we knew it, creating a new beginning for millions of Americans.

In the past decade, welfare rolls have dropped substantially, from 12.2 million in 1996 to 4.5 million today. At the same time, caseloads declined by 54 percent. Sixty percent of mothers who left welfare found work, far surpassing predictions of experts. Through the Welfare to Work Partnership, which my administration started to speed the transition to employment, more than 20,000 businesses hired 1.1 million former welfare recipients. Welfare reform has proved a great success, and I am grateful to the Democrats and Republicans who had the courage to work together to take bold action.

The success of welfare reform was bolstered by other anti-poverty initiatives, including the doubling of the earned-income tax credit in 1993 for lower-income workers; the 1997 Balanced Budget Act, which included \$3 billion to move long-term welfare recipients and low-income, noncustodial fathers into jobs; the Access to Jobs initiative, which helped communities create innovative transportation services to enable former welfare recipients and other low-income workers to get to their new jobs; and the welfare-to-work tax credit, which provided tax incentives to encourage businesses to hire long-term welfare recipients.

I also signed into law the toughest child-support enforcement in history, doubling collections; an increase in the minimum wage in 1997; a doubling of federal financing for child care, helping parents look after 1.5 million children in 1998; and a near doubling of financing for Head Start programs.

The results: child poverty dropped to 16.2 percent in 2000, the lowest rate since 1979, and in 2000, the percentage of Americans on welfare reached its lowest level in four decades. Overall, 100 times as many people moved out of poverty and into the middle class during our eight years as in the previous 12. Of course the booming economy helped, but the empowerment policies made a big difference.

Regarding the politics of welfare reform, there is a great lesson to be learned, particularly in today's hyper-partisan environment, where the Republican leadership forces bills through Congress without even a hint of bipartisanship. Simply put, welfare reform worked because we all worked together. The 1996 Welfare Act shows us how much we can achieve when both parties bring their best ideas to the negotiating table and focus on doing what is best for the country.

The recent welfare reform amendments, largely Republican-only initiatives, cut back on states' ability to devise their own programs. They also disallowed hours spent pursuing

an education from counting against required weekly work hours. I doubt they will have the positive impact of the original legislation.

We should address the inadequacies of the latest welfare reauthorization in a bipartisan manner, by giving states the flexibility to consider higher education as a category of “work,” and by doing more to help people get the education they need and the jobs they deserve. And perhaps even more than additional welfare reform, we need to raise the minimum wage, create more good jobs through a commitment to a clean energy future and enact tax and other policies to support families in work and child-rearing.

Ten years ago, neither side got exactly what it had hoped for. While we compromised to reach an agreement, we never betrayed our principles and we passed a bill that worked and stood the test of time. This style of cooperative governing is anything but a sign of weakness. It is a measure of strength, deeply rooted in our Constitution and history, and essential to the better future that all Americans deserve, Republicans and Democrats alike.

Bill Clinton, the 42nd president, heads the Clinton Foundation.

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August 22, 2006

Medicare premiums to rise

Seniors earning more than \$80,000 will pay more for Part B during three-year rollout; hike starts in Jan.

Laurie McGinley / Wall Street Journal

Later this year, older adults with higher incomes will get unwelcome news from Uncle Sam: They'll have to pay a bigger share of their Medicare costs, starting in January.

Under the new means test, enacted as part of the 2003 Medicare prescription-drug act:

About 1.5 million seniors will be required to pay higher premiums for Part B, which covers doctors' visits and outpatient care.

The change, to be phased in over three years, will affect single beneficiaries with incomes greater than \$80,000 and couples with incomes greater than \$160,000.

The means testing, designed to save Medicare \$2 billion a year when fully phased in, is spurring sharp debate even before the change goes into effect. Supporters say it's only fair that wealthier Americans pay more for benefits. Critics counter that Medicare was designed to be a social-insurance program, not a welfare program, and that all beneficiaries should pay the same.

The impact

Seniors with higher incomes will see a rise in what they have to pay for their Part B coverage, on top of the regular premium increases that occur most years to help cover the program's steadily rising costs. Means testing won't apply to the separate Part D premiums charged for prescription-drug coverage.

What seniors will pay in 2007, according to estimates by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which runs Medicare:

For individuals with incomes of less than \$80,000: The Part B premium is \$88.50 a month; that number is expected to rise to at least \$98.20 next year, reflecting increasing costs.

Incomes of \$80,000 to \$100,000: \$111.20 a month.

Incomes of \$100,000 to \$150,000: \$130.70.

Incomes of \$150,000 to \$200,000: \$150.10.

Incomes above \$200,000: \$169.50.

By 2009, when means testing is fully phased in, beneficiaries with incomes above \$200,000 are expected to pay \$314.60 a month, more than three times the premium for those with incomes of less than \$80,000. The thresholds will be adjusted for inflation.

Seniors' advocacy groups, including AARP, are staunchly opposed. They argue that means testing won't save the government much money, and that it undermines the everyone-in-the-same-boat nature of the program.

"The great thing about Medicare is that everybody is in it together," says Deane Beebe of the Medicare Rights Center.

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Article published Aug 22, 2006

Calhoun County Board of Health considering cuts, layoffs

Elizabeth Huff

The Enquirer

The Calhoun County Board of Health is considering layoffs and service cuts in anticipation of losing \$1.65 million in revenue next fiscal year.

The loss is the result of federal, state and grant money that had been reduced or not renewed this year. The 2005-26 budget was \$5.65 million. The 2006-07 proposed budget has been reduced to \$4 million.

During a health board meeting Monday, Dottie-Kay Bowersox, health officer for the Department of Public Health, proposed cutting 15 of the 75 positions within the health department.

Nine of those 15 positions are vacant; six people would be laid off or reassigned within the health department.

After lengthy discussion Monday at the Calhoun County Board of Health meeting, the final decision was postponed to an early September meeting.

Also, Wendy Tackett, a self-employed program evaluator at iEval of Battle Creek, recommended restructuring the Nursing Clinic of Battle Creek to be a free clinic or to merge services with the Family Health Center.

The clinic, which primarily serves homeless and uninsured people, now operates under federal dollars and donations, but is not in compliance with regulations for a federally qualified medical center.

The clinic does not provide preventive, mental health, dental or well-child services, which are required for a clinic to be a federally qualified medical center.

It has continued to receive federal funding since the mid-1990s, despite the fact that it hasn't ever complied with the federal standards, said Tackett.

What services it does provide are beyond the original mandate of episodic care.

Episodic care provides immediate care for those in need and directs others to the proper resources.

The clinic operates beyond episodic care by providing prescriptions and servicing diabetic patients who need consistent care.

In 2005, the clinic took in 1,560 patients. Some board members were opposed to the proposals.

Board of Health member Byron McDonald said he had received multiple calls from people who are concerned that the nursing clinic will be closed.

"To me, that is probably one of the three jewels of this health department," he said.

Bowersox and Tackett contended that the clinic will not necessarily close.

It most likely will go back to being a free clinic providing episodic care and acting as an entry point for the homeless and uninsured. Or it will become absorbed into the Family Health Center if the center approves, said Diane Craig, public relations coordinator for the health center.

Because the fate of the clinic is still undecided, County Commissioner Ben Miller, D-District 3, the county board's representative on the Health Board, said it should not be included on the budget for approval.

The nursing clinic cost \$709,090 this fiscal year and has been proposed to be cut to \$159,061 this coming year.

Also, at least five of the positions slated to be cut are involved with the nursing clinic, said Miller.

The health department board recommendations will go to the county commissioners on Sept. 21. The health department is required to have a balanced budget in place by Sept. 30 for the coming fiscal year.

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August 22, 2006

Man faces charges in Medicaid fraud case

Livonia drug firm's president accused of bilking state of \$5M; more charges possible.

Charlie Cain / Detroit News Lansing Bureau

The president of a Livonia pharmaceutical supply company stood mute Monday at his arraignment on 148 counts of Medicaid fraud, the largest case of its kind in state history, according to Attorney General Mike Cox.

Daniel Edward Lohmeier, 43, of South Lyon, who heads Specialized Pharmacy Services Inc., waived his right to a 14-day pretrial hearing during a brief appearance before Judge David Jordan in 54B District Court in East Lansing.

Afterward, neither Lohmeier nor his attorney, David DuMouchel of Detroit, would comment on the charges.

According to Cox, Lohmeier from 1999 through 2005 bilked the state out of at least \$5 million through Medicaid fraud, including the billing for prescriptions allegedly dispensed to 20 deceased people.

Cox said the investigation is ongoing and could result in additional charges. He said investigators will continue to probe for evidence of "any corporate fraud or liability."

Jordan said a pretrial hearing would be scheduled at some future date, allowing attorneys reasonable time to review the volumes of paperwork involved in the criminal investigation by the Attorney General's Office, the Michigan Department of Community Health, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the FBI.

Cox said the case against Lohmeier also includes charges that he double-billed for drugs and in other instances billed the state for prescriptions that were never filled.

Specialized Pharmacy is a subsidiary of Omnicare Inc., a Fortune 500 company based in Covington, Ky.

Omnicare is the nation's largest provider of prescription drugs and pharmacy services to long-term care facilities.

You can reach Charlie Cain at (517) 371-2470 or ccain@detnews.com.

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Monday, August 21, 2006

Laini E. Venson, 24, of 2702 Beechwood was sentenced by Judge Crane to two years of probation for attempting to commit welfare fraud-failing to report income exceeding \$500 from March 1, 2003, to June 30, 2003, in Saginaw County. The judge ordered Venson to pay \$3,172 in restitution and \$360 in fees and fines. Venson pleaded guilty.

Judge gives 15-year-old prison for attempted murder

Tuesday, August 22, 2006

By Lynn Turner

lturner@kalamazoogazette.com 388-8564

Myquan Deantae Rogers is 15 and headed to prison.

The Kalamazoo teen was sentenced Monday to a minimum of eight years in prison to a maximum of 20 years after being convicted of assault with intent to commit murder.

Clad in an orange Kalamazoo County Jail jumpsuit, a shadow of a goatee growing, Rogers jutted out his chin as three deputies accompanied him into the courtroom of Kalamazoo County Circuit Court Judge Richard Ryan Lamb.

“You're a highly intelligent individual, but you make decisions that makes one wonder if you have any intelligence at all,” the judge told him.

Rogers was charged with shooting two men on Florence Street on May 20. He had been ordered to stand trial as an adult but escaped the county Juvenile Home by jumping out a window. He was caught about two weeks later.

In July, Rogers agreed to plead guilty to one count of assault with intent to commit murder in exchange for prosecutors dropping a second, identical count and two weapons charges.

Earlier this month, while awaiting his sentencing, Rogers broke the door to his bedroom in the juvenile home, prompting officials to move him to the county jail.

“It's time to grow up and take responsibility,” Lamb told the teen Monday. “You act up like you did at the juvenile home and you'll be (in prison) for a long, long, long, long time.”

Rogers declined to comment, except to say he had written a letter to the judge that included everything he wanted him to know. He waved to people in the courtroom and smiled as deputies led him out.

Tuesday, August 22, 2006

Oledan: Landmark law

*By Radzini Oledan
Slice Of Life*

THE hard work now begins.

The newly approved RA 9344, otherwise known as the "Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006", signals the need for multi-sectoral effort not only to protect the youthful offenders but also keep them out from jail.

Child advocates may have lobbied hard for the passage of the law, but policy mechanism is one thing and the readiness of the community to work for restorative justice is another thing.

As of now, there is still a need to define and even localize the implementation of the newly approved law to really ensure that children in conflict with law will be protected.

Under the new law, a child under 18 years of age who is accused of, or adjudged as, having committed a minor criminal offense will not simply be punished like before, but is made to undergo a process by which he will eventually be restored as a productive member of society as if he has never been in conflict with the law.

For several years, lives of children who were unjustly put behind bars were wasted. They have to

contend with a prison system that keeps them from reforming.

Putting them in bars with adult offenders only places them into further power dynamics, with them being on the receiving end of ridicule and possible abuse.

The new law puts forth a comprehensive system for the administration of juvenile justice, including the rehabilitation of youthful offenders and their reintegration into their communities, and the prevention of juvenile delinquency. It raises the age of criminal responsibility to fifteen, from nine as provided in existing laws. A child between 15 and 18 can be charged only if he or she committed the act, knowing that it was a crime.

The law's mechanisms fall under the general framework of what children's rights advocates call "restorative justice," or one that presumes that children in conflict with the law are themselves victims. Those children who come in conflict with the law will undertake what the law calls a "diversion program" that involves their families, communities, and local barangay officials; detention becomes a last resort.

We have yet to see how the diversion program takes place in our own city as it is yet to be lodged with the City Social Services and Development Office (CSSDO), which

have the technical expertise to handle children in conflict with law and possible diversion program.

Under the law, cases of children 15 years old and below at the time of the commission of the crime will immediately be dismissed and the child will be referred to the appropriate local social welfare and development officer. The officer will then determine whether to release the child to the custody of his/her parents, or refer the child to a community-based reintegration program.

How fast can the courts work on cases of detained children remains to be seen? The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology is yet to finish an inventory of detained children nationwide.

The genuine implementation of the law will hinge on the understanding of the whole community, and especially those who are set to enforce it-police, prosecutors, families and the barangays.

More than the usual reactive approach, discussion should be on the prevention of juvenile delinquency.

Barangays will have to lead the way in instituting a comprehensive juvenile intervention program that includes general measures to promote social justice and equal opportunity, which tackle perceive root cases of offending;

measures to assist children at risk and tertiary intervention to include measures to avoid unnecessary contact with the formal justice system and other measures to prevent re-offending.

Various studies by children's rights advocates say these children live in appalling conditions while in detention, with their rights routinely violated, without any hope of being rehabilitated and with increasing likelihood of re-offending.

There is much to be done rather than celebrating the passage of a landmark law. Remember the Child and Youth Welfare Code which provide for the establishment of local detention centers where youthful offenders should be held and only in the absence of such centers will juveniles be put behind bars, and in cells separate from those of adults? As usual, exception became the rule. History cannot merely repeat itself.



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Panhandlers face new restrictions City rule requires 10-foot buffer at doorways, ATMs

Tuesday, August 22, 2006

By Kathy Jessup

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Kalamazoo's downtown business interests and advocates for the city's homeless both praised passage of a compromise panhandling ordinance Monday that tightens control over public begging but creates no "panhandling-free" zones.

A last-minute amendment to the revamped ordinance by the Kalamazoo City Commission diffused planned protests by the Kalamazoo Homeless Action Network on Monday. That change bans panhandling within 10 feet of the entrance of public buildings or businesses, rather than an earlier proposal to set a 20-foot buffer.

Homeless advocates had questioned the 20-foot proposal, saying it would have effectively banned panhandling in much of Kalamazoo's central business district, including the downtown Kalamazoo Mall.

Chris Lampen-Crowell, president of Kalamazoo's Downtown Retailers Association, called the 10-foot amendment "a compromise of good faith."

"We unanimously agree that panhandling is behavior we do not condone," Lampen-Crowell said in a letter on behalf of DRA. "Panhandling is not good for our customers, community nor the individuals panhandling...We offer this compromise in good faith that this ordinance promotes the safety and civility of all members of the Downtown Kalamazoo community."

Besides banning begging within 10 feet of building entrances, the ordinance also makes it a violation to seek money or goods near an automated teller machine, from someone under the age of 16, after sunset or before sunrise, or on private property without the owner's advance permission.

It's also outlawed on public buses, at the Kalamazoo Transportation Center and from people in vehicles. In addition, panhandlers can be charged now if they offer one reason for needing a handout, but intend to use the money for another purpose.

While Commissioner Barbara Miller voted for the measure, she said she was "disappointed" by the smaller panhandling-free zone.

"Numerous customers shy away from downtown because they're uncomfortable being accosted for money," Miller said. "I would love to see the whole downtown area be panhandling-free. If problems continue, I hope we will revisit this sooner rather than later."

But Mike Kilbourne, a KHAN staffer, called the compromise a "mutually satisfactory victory."

"This sounds like a victory for the homeless community in Kalamazoo and let's keep it going in this direction," he said.

DESIREE COOPER: A helping hand goes better without rush to judgment

BY DESIREE COOPER

FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

August 22, 2006

My son and I were leaving a Southfield Coney Island on Thursday, when a man called out to us: "Do you have some money so I can eat?"

Crackhead, I thought. *He's going to just take my money and buy drugs or get drunk.*

That's the ragged edge of charity, when giving to the poor can feel more like enabling than empowering. I've struggled over the years with what to do in that situation: Sometimes I give, sometimes I don't.

But this time, I was emboldened by the company of my 18-year-old, who's built like a linebacker. And I wondered what I'd be teaching him if I pretended not to hear another person's plea for food -- just minutes after we'd stuffed ourselves.

So I did what I hadn't done in a while -- I stopped.

Guess who's coming to dinner?

The man was dark-skinned and thin, although not emaciated. His eyes were unexpectedly amber, and his hair was spiked in unkempt, tiny dreads. He wore a dark blue cotton mechanic's jacket, and he carried a small plastic bag, presumably for his possessions.

"Do you really want something to eat?" I asked.

He nodded, so I took him back into the restaurant as the waitress eyed us warily.

After introducing himself as James, he became so absorbed with the menu, I wondered whether he was having trouble reading. Just in case, I began to suggest items. He exclaimed, "Oh, yeah!" or "That would be great!" to everything I said, eventually settling on fried mushrooms, a hamburger, fries and a Diet Coke.

If we were friends, we would have talked about work or movies or sports. Instead,

I chatted awkwardly, trying to ease his obvious discomfort.

He wouldn't make eye contact. Mostly he talked to his hands. He said he was from Ann Arbor, where he thought he still had family, but wasn't sure. He'd been trying to get into Providence Hospital, he said, because he'd just been released from a hospital downtown. I noticed with alarm that he still wore a plastic hospital ID bracelet.

"I'm schizophrenic," he volunteered. "They let me out, but they didn't give me any medicine."

Who's scared of whom?

You've seen the movie. A mental patient breaks out of a hospital and kills innocents who stop to help. I wondered if I'd made a mistake.

But then I remembered that in Michigan, the violence went the other way around: Policymakers attacked the mentally ill during the 1990s, substituting incarceration for compassion. A 2004 report from the Michigan Mental Health Commission cited as a major problem the number of mentally ill people who are showing up in courts, the child welfare system and prisons.

"I don't like eating in front of people," James said.

Taking the hint, I changed his order to carryout. When it arrived, I made him promise to eat it.

"I will," he said, walking away.

I have no idea if he ever did.

Contact **DESIREE COOPER** at 313-222-6625 or dcooper@freepress.com.

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MPSC Requests Proposals For Low Income Heat Fund

MIRS, Monday, August 21, 2006

The Public Service Commission (MPSC) today released a request for proposals (RFP) for up to \$45 million for the Low-Income and Energy Efficiency Fund, which brings heat to the poor.

"The MPSC is acting now to ensure that much-needed assistance is available to help Michigan's low-income households with their heating bills this winter," said MPSC Chairman Peter **LARK**. "My colleagues and I are committed to expediting the process to ensure that funds get to the people who need help the most."

The proposals are due by 5 p.m., Friday, Sept. 22.

The MPSC also dismissed AT&T's petition to resolve a dispute with the City of Belleville over a permit to use the public rights-of-way. The Commission noted, however, that AT& T still has the opportunity to file a complaint against the City of Belleville in a separate proceeding, should it choose to do so.

Michigan Report

August 21, 2006

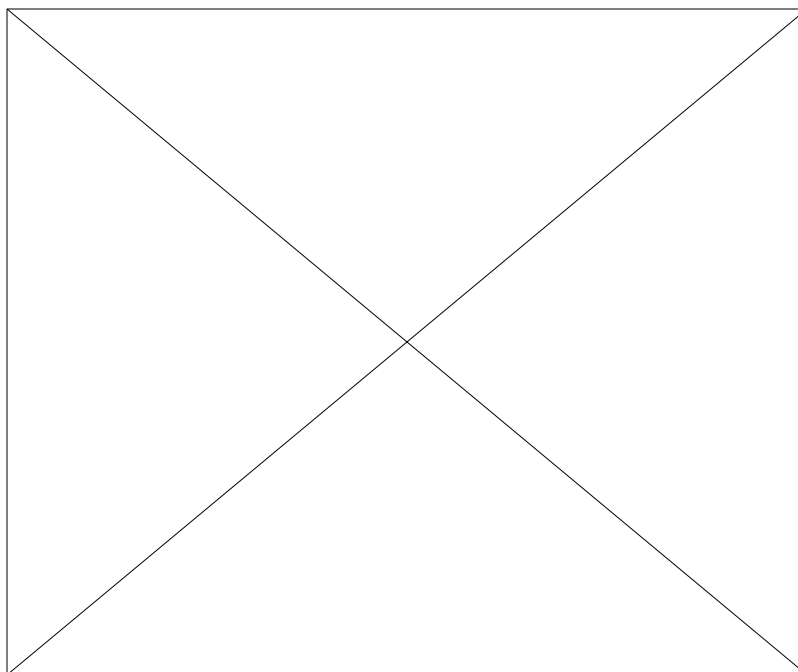
P.S.C. SEEKS PROPOSALS FOR LOW-INCOME FUNDS

The Public Service Commission has some \$45 million from the Low-Income and Energy Efficiency Fund to pass out in the next round of grants and is seeking ideas for using the funds.

As has become tradition, the fall grants are for programs that will assist low-income residents in paying heat bills and avoiding utility disconnection. The commission seeks proposals in the spring for energy efficiency and weatherization programs.

NO CONTACT: The commission also issued a reminder Monday for parents to register their children's email addresses with the Protect MI Child Registry to ensure they do not receive inappropriate solicitations.

"As parents prepare their children to go back to school, they should consider using the Protect MI Child Registry," said PSC Chair Peter Lark. "Many children now routinely use computers at home and at school, leaving them vulnerable to receiving electronic messages that promote products and services that are illegal for them. The Protect MI Child Registry is a tool available to help shield children from these inappropriate messages. Registration is free and easy on the Protect MI Child Web site: michigan.gov/protectmichild."



Building A Bridge

By TYLER SIPE

8/21/06

Record-Eagle photographer



Record-Eagle/Tyler Sipe

Andie Gonzalez, 22, right, surveys Maria Isabel while her son Andy, 5, listens at a migrant camp in Leelanau County. The survey covered health issues unique to migrants and when complete will better assess the health needs of the region's migrant and seasonal workers, who work mostly in agriculture.

Andie Gonzalez stared out the passenger side window, taking in the vast horizon of cherry orchards in Leelanau County.

The Texas native sought something she recognized from her past — migrants.

Gonzalez, 22, and peer Rachel Lovis, 23, worked alongside two other interns, Ryan Malosh, 22, and Emily Nykaza, 20, in locating migrant camps and their inhabitants in Antrim, Grand Traverse and Leelanau counties.

The four logged about 8,000 miles during their eight-week journey to interview the nearly 314 migrants and seasonal workers at about 120 migrant camps and locations.

The four students interned as part of Project Puente, a program funded and coordinated by Northwest Michigan Health Services. The program's inaugural year aims to increase access to health care and outreach services and understand the health needs of the area's migrant workforce.

"I'm really happy that I've been part of this," Gonzalez said with tears in her eyes, as she addressed her new friends and co-workers at an end-of-year barbecue.

"It touches my heart," she said. "Coming from a migrant background, I appreciate everybody's help for this community."

Project Puente will continue in future growing seasons with expanded work and research directed toward the 12,000 to 15,000 migrants living in Northwest Michigan Health Services' seven-county coverage area.



ourMidland.com
from the Midland Daily News

08/21/2006

Child support payments to be distributed electronically

Midland Daily News

The Department of Human Services will begin disbursing child support payments by debit card in some mid-Michigan counties starting Wednesday.

State law requires all child support payments to be electronically deposited into a personal checking/savings account unless the person meets hardship criteria.

The program is through DHS's Office of Child Support and is coordinated with county Friend of the Court offices. The program has been implemented in 52 counties and eventually will be in all counties.

The following mid-Michigan counties will start the program Aug. 23: Midland, Bay, Gladwin, Clare, Isabella, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee, Montcalm, Newaygo, Oceana, Ogemaw, Osceola, Roscommon and Wexford.

The new VISA debit card will be provided free of charge and can be used like any other bank or credit union debit card. ATM fees will be charged when using the card at an automated teller machine. DHS clients currently receiving child support by direct deposit do not have to switch.

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Article published Aug 22, 2006

Woman makes impact in child care

By Kristofer Karol

DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

While in graduate school, Carolyn Kraft thought she would one day become a professor.

She still wound up in the classroom, but not quite in the role she imagined.

"It was occurring to me that I would be teaching students who wouldn't be going on to use it," Kraft, 32, said. "I wanted to have more of a direct impact."

Kraft came aboard more than four years ago with the Livingston County Community Coordinated Child Care Council, or Livingston 4C Council. She retired from her position as early childhood mental health consultant on Friday and was expecting to be at her new abode in Pennsylvania by Sunday.

During the former Lansing resident's time with the group, there were improvements in the Success For Kids in Child Care program, which aims to help children from birth to age 5 who might have behavioral issues.

"When I first started, it was very, very short-term," Kraft said, adding she used to be a part-time employee. "I would mostly talk over the phone and go to the day-care center once. It's really expanded."

As the program developed, Kraft would visit and observe children at day-care centers up to four times, as well as meet with the child at home. The point of the program was to make sure children would not get expelled from day-care providers.

Kraft said it's been two years since she had a child expelled, and she's helped 88 children by interacting with parents, day-care providers and the youth themselves.

Of course, the job had its downsides, too.

"It's also very difficult to help a parent realize their child has a special need," Kraft said. "Knowing I've ruined their day, it's just horrible.

"It can end up being very rewarding, knowing the child will get the help they need," she added.

Linda Herbert, the council's executive director, appreciates all the hard work Kraft put into the job.

"The biggest asset that Carolyn brought to the program was that not only does she have a mental health background, but she was an experienced child-care provider, so she had worked in the field in both," Herbert said. "We were blessed to have her here while we did."

Kraft said she was pleased to work with Livingston County residents, who she could tell cared greatly about their children's well-being. By the end of the year, Kraft will get a chance to work with her own child — she's expecting her first child.

She hopes to get back into the field one day.

"Knowing that I've helped somebody and impacted the child and turning someone's life around, that's important to me," Kraft said.



Hillsdale man has drive to help out

Monday, August 21, 2006

Wayne Love just loves helping children.

For nine years, Love has volunteered with the Jackson County Department of Human Services, transporting children and their relatives.

Using his own vehicle, the Hillsdale man takes clients in foster care or residential homes to medical and dental appointments, and makes court-appointed parental visits possible, said Sandra Weingart, community resource coordinator for the agency.

"We always have a need for volunteer transporters, and Wayne has a real heart for it," Weingart said.

"He especially has a huge heart for kids and does really well with the young ones because he adores them and they adore him. He's always doing extra things for the people he transports."

Camp for grieving

A host of volunteers from the Jackson area recently helped provide a unique camping experience for children and adults grieving the death of someone significant in their lives.

Annually, Hospice of Jackson & Oaklawn collaborates with hospices in neighboring counties to sponsor Camp Weave-A-Hope, a family grief support camp each summer at Sherman Lake Campground, near Augusta.

"This is definitely a volunteer-driven program, and health professionals, therapists and other Jackson residents donate their time and expertise," said LeeAnn Kendall, hospice's marketing coordinator.

Hospice bereavement coordinator Patrice Cox, who co-directs the camp, said volunteers are particularly crucial to the camp's success in teaching families coping skills for dealing with death.

"Our volunteer staff keep things running smoothly and helps us meet the needs of grieving children and adults," Cox said. "They are very committed to this weekend camping experience and work like the devil, serving as group leaders and cabin counselors."

The death of his daughter in 2005 prompted Jackson resident Jeff Newsom to get involved with the camp. Newsom, co-owner of a dove release business named Crystal Wings and Amber Dreams, provided a free, white dove release at a memorial service that traditionally closes camp.

Newsom received help orchestrating the dove release from his wife, Celia, and son-in-law, Jeff McCormick. The family also took part in a candle lighting and poem reading.

"It was a great experience, and we're definitely planning on being involved in next year's camp," he said.

Crystal Wings and Amber Dreams offers free dove release services at charitable events in Jackson County

or for any Jackson military personnel, police officer or firefighter who dies in the line of duty, Newsom said.

"Jeff is the most wonderful man," Cox said. "We're really grateful to him and everyone who helps our campers in coping with the loss of a loved one."

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Granholm Shifts Departments

Gov. Jennifer [GRANHOLM](#) announced that the following departmental changes:

- The Community Service Commission will be overseen by the Department of Human Services
- Certain functions of the Department of Information Technology will be transferred to the Department of Management and Budget (DMB)
- The Local Government Claims Review Board will be overseen by the DMB
- The State Tax Commission will oversee the State Board of Assessors functions

Detroit News

August 22, 2006

Rochester

Oakland U. to expand social work program

A collaboration between Oakland University and Michigan State University is in the works to develop accredited bachelor's and master's programs in social work for Oakland University. Currently, Oakland offers a social work concentration within the sociology program, but now will offer a bachelor's degree in social work. An MSU faculty member will work as a consultant to Oakland to establish the curriculum, policies and procedures. The partnership also will help OU earn accreditation for the new program from the Council on Social Work Education. Oakland students will be able to be licensed in social work by the state of Michigan as soon as they graduate.



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

News Release

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Michigan Department of Human Services Summarily Suspends the Child Placing Agency License (License Number CB820201444) of Lula Belle Stewart Center, Inc.

August 22, 2006

The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Children and Adult Licensing issued an order of summary suspension and notice of intent to revoke the license of Wayne County child placing agency licensee Lula Belle Stewart Center, Inc., 11000 West McNichols, Detroit, Michigan. This action resulted from a recent investigation of a complaint of the child placing agency.

The August 18, 2006 complaint investigation found violations of the Child Care Organizations Act and administrative rules regarding reevaluations of foster family homes, service plans for foster children, staff qualifications, license recommendations, special evaluations, visitations, and reporting of child abuse or neglect. OCAL took emergency action to protect the health, welfare, and safety of children.

Effective 6:00 p.m., August 21, 2006, the Summary Suspension Order prohibits Lula Belle Stewart Center, Inc. from operating a child placing agency at 11000 West McNichols, Detroit, Michigan or at any other address or location. Accordingly, they may not accept children for care after that date and time nor may they provide child placing agency services.

Lula Belle Stewart Center, Inc. has held a license to operate a child placing agency since July 15, 1993.

Michigan law defines a child placing agency as, "a governmental organization or an agency organized under the non-profit corporation act 1982 PA 162, MCL 450.2101 to 450.3192, for the purpose of receiving children for placement in private family homes for foster care or for adoption. The function of a child placing agency may include investigating applicants for

adoption and investigating and certifying foster family homes and foster family group homes as provided in this act. The function of a child placing agency may also include supervising children who are 16 or 17 years of age and who are living in unlicensed residences as provided in section 5(4).”

For more information, consult DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs.